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Anglo-Norse Review

Front cover image. No, this is not some photo from southern Europe that has got onto the cover of the *Review* by mistake. It is in fact Thomas Angellsgate, Trondheim, taken in June 2019. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

ANGLO-NORSE REVIEW

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Editorial

First, I hope that members are still well, and coping with the dual challenges of winter and the restrictions of Covid. As it seems we may not be clear of the virus before some time later in the spring it has already been decided to issue another extra *Review*, this time in late March, to compensate a little for the lack of meetings and outings.

The virus made the editor wonder about earlier plagues and diseases that may have afflicted Norway, and while the Black Death seemed too huge a topic to cover in an article, leprosy was a disease that ravaged Norway more than some other countries in the nineteenth century, hence the very fascinating article by Magnus Vollset, who wrote his Norwegian doctorate on the subject. How the disease was brought under control shows some similarites with how Covid-19 is being brought under control.

The article on Graham Greene and Nordahl Grieg in the October issue of the *Review* mentioned that Grieg had spent time at Wadham College Oxford. This led to the editor wondering whether he was the first Norwegian to have studied there, which in turn led to the article in this issue.

This issue continues the very fascinating 'How Norwegian A met British B', and the topic is not exhausted, so if anyone, who has not yet submitted their family story, and still wishes to do so, please go ahead. It is not too late and I will be grateful for material for the extra late March *Review*

In the July issue there was a fascinating article by the Norwegian cultural historian, Professor Bjarne Rogan on winter transport in Norway; in this issue there is an equally fascinating one on the Norwegian posting system or *skyssvesen*.

The Frankfurt Book Fair is always a major literary event and in 2019, Norway was guest of honour there, and Kari Dickson brings us up-to-date on all the good things we could be reading.

Ever so often comments come back to me to the effect 'could there not be more on X, Y or Z.' If you are someone who thinks that, please tell me (review@anglo-norse.org.uk). Even better, send me a draft article or tell me of someone who might be able to write such an article!

The Norway Scholarship to Wadham College, Oxford

By Sir Richcard Dales

Ed. Mention of Wadham College in Johanne Elster Hanson's article about Graham Greene and Nordahl Grieg in the last issue of the Review *made me wonder when and how the association between Wadham College and Norway had started, so I wrote to the librarian there, who passed my enquiry on to the Keeper of the Archives, Jeffrey Hackney, who cheerfully supplied the material on which this article is based. From the material it emerged that our former Chairman, Sir Richard Dales, had played a significant role in increasing the funding for the Norwegian Scholarship when he was Ambassador to Norway, so it seemed only appropriate that he should write the article.*

2020 marked the centenary of the Norway Scholarship, or the Wadham Scholarship as it is sometimes known. It can be seen as a kind of Rhodes Scholarship for Norwegians. It was the initiative soon after the end of the First World War of Arthur Jayne, who had been British Vice-Consul in Kristiansund. He had witnessed the cultural supremacy of Germany in Norwegian minds and the inadequacies of Britain's wartime propaganda towards (neutral) Norway resulting from the sheer lack of understanding of Norwegians. Sending highly educated Norwegians to Oxford where they would get to know young Brits similarly on the verge of their very likely distinguished careers would benefit both countries. So Jayne established the Norway Scholarship to 'strengthen the ties of friendship, sympathy and mutual understanding between Norwegian and English academic youth'. He persuaded his own College, Wadham, to accept a Norwegian graduate as a member of the College so that they would experience college life to the full. The scholars were to be chosen by a special academic committee at Oslo University.

Jayne first had to raise money for it. Having worked for a while with Fridtjof Nansen and being married to the daughter of the rector of Oslo University, (Bredo Munthe af Morgenstierne, a distinguished constitutional lawyer), he had little difficulty in raising NOK 60,000 (then roughly £3000) in Norway which together with a contribution from the College itself, enabled the scheme to be launched. The first scholarship in 1920 was worth £200 and awarded to G.Astrup-Hoel to study law and since then this prestigious scholarship to Wadham College, Oxford, has been awarded annually, except for the war years, when there was no money or when there were simply no

candidates of sufficient calibre. It has been awarded for the study of a wide range of subjects including medicine, economics, Russian and, recently, European studies. Nordahl Grieg was among the first 'Norway Scholars', in 1923. He studied English history and literature. Most Norway Scholars go on to achieve prominent positions in their future careers, whether in government, business or the arts, having got to know British students in college with similar destinies. That, of course, is the main point of it all.

I first heard of the Norway Scholarship from Mark Elliott who was briefing me as I took over from him in 1998 as British Ambassador to Norway. And it was not long after my arrival in Oslo that Alf Bøe got in touch. He was Director of the Munch Museum in Oslo but that was not what he wanted to talk about. He wanted to make sure that I, a Cambridge man, would continue to support the Wadham Scholarship. At the time the Norwegian Government paid for thousands of young Norwegians to go to British universities so a special Oxford scheme might be deemed unnecessary. I had no difficulty in reassuring him; the Norway Scholarship was fully in line with British policy to select potential winners to get to know their British counterparts. The Foreign Office has similar, world-wide, scholarship schemes (Chevening Awards) for study at British universities, not only Oxford or Cambridge.

Alf Bøe. Photo courtesy of the Munch Museum, Oslo.

Alf Bøe was himself a double Wadham Scholar, having won the award in both 1952 and 1953. His thesis on *Theories of Victorian Design* was later published as a book. He also wrote the article unearthed by the Keeper of the Wadham College Archives referred to above. Bøe had been senior curator of the Kunstindustrimuseum (Decorative Arts Museum) in Oslo and in charge of the Oslo City art collections. He was very knowledgeable about the British cultural and artistic influence on Norway and vice-versa and played a prominent role in Norway's cultural life. He had discovered in the late 1970's that the Norway Scholarship had not been awarded for several years due to lack of money and set out to revive it. He formed a committee of previous Norway Scholars, got the support the Master of Wadham and also of the British Ambassador, Sir William Bentley, who also happened to be a Wadham man, and prepared a list of potential major donors together with a prospectus to be sent to them. He hinted at the support of both King Olav and Crown Prince Harald, both of whom had been at Balliol, Oxford as well as of Princess Astrid (Lady Margaret Hall, 1952). By 1985, he had collected over a million kroner (over £100,000).

In 1981, Bøe had initiated an annual dinner for Norway Scholars, other Oxford alumni or Norwegians with a connection with Oxford to serve as 'a group which might be referred to when raising money'. The Scholars attending included some very distinguished Norwegians at the top of their professions, whether as politicians, businessmen, artists or academics. The dinners were usually attended by King Olav (later King Harald) and the British Ambassador and were held in prestigious venues, for example the Kunstindustrimuseum. The Norway Oxford Committee also invited people from Wadham College to attend the dinner and to give a lecture in Oslo to help raise funds. The first of these was given by Sir Stuart Hampshire, the Warden of Wadham, on 'Convention and Morality' and he began the tradition of the Oxford representative/lecturer staying at the British Ambassador's Residence. Later, in the 1990s, the Committee organised seminars to raise funds. The first of these was given by Sir Claus Moser, then Warden of Wadham College, who was chairman of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. His subject was the Financing the Arts and was held in the Munch Museum. This seminar opened up the debate on sponsorship for financing the arts in Norway, which until then had usually been seen as a matter for central and local government. Sir Roger Penrose lectured at Oslo University on 'String Theory' which was controversial among mathematicians at the time. These seminars and lectures could be very influential.

Like my predecessors, I as British Ambassador, was very supportive of the Wadham Scholarship. It was/is after all a good example of soft diplomacy. My wife and I looked forward to entertaining the lecturers from Oxford as house guests, and began a new tradition of hosting a private dinner for them to meet distinguished Norwegians in their field. When at the turn of the

millennium Alf Bøe told me that funds were running short again we decided to go for a personal appeal to a few chosen 'high net worth' Norwegians who would be invited to a Black-Tie Dinner at the Residence. This was very successful and raised about NOK 1 million, though one participant turned out to be a member of my own Cambridge College and questioned my loyalties! Bøe retired in 2003, but we had become close friends and we met each year until he died in 2010. I do not know how many fund-raising events there have been since 2000. However I know that the Norway Scholarship is still going. The present Norwegian Minister of Culture, Abid Raja, is a Wadham Scholar.

Members of the Society will have noted that the purpose of the Norway Scholarship as set out by Jayne in 1919 is very similar to that of the Anglo-Norse Society which was founded about the same time. The Society has long granted bursaries to British students to study in Norway and on its centenary initiated an additional, broader, more prestigious scholarship scheme. Helping people from both countries, who are likely to become distinguished in their field, 'to strengthen the ties of….mutual understanding' is as important as ever. And it so happens that at least one Norway Scholar is a member of ANS (in Oslo);- Frode Haverkamp (1972), former Senior Curator at the Norwegian National Gallery, who was to have lectured to the London Society last summer before Covid struck.

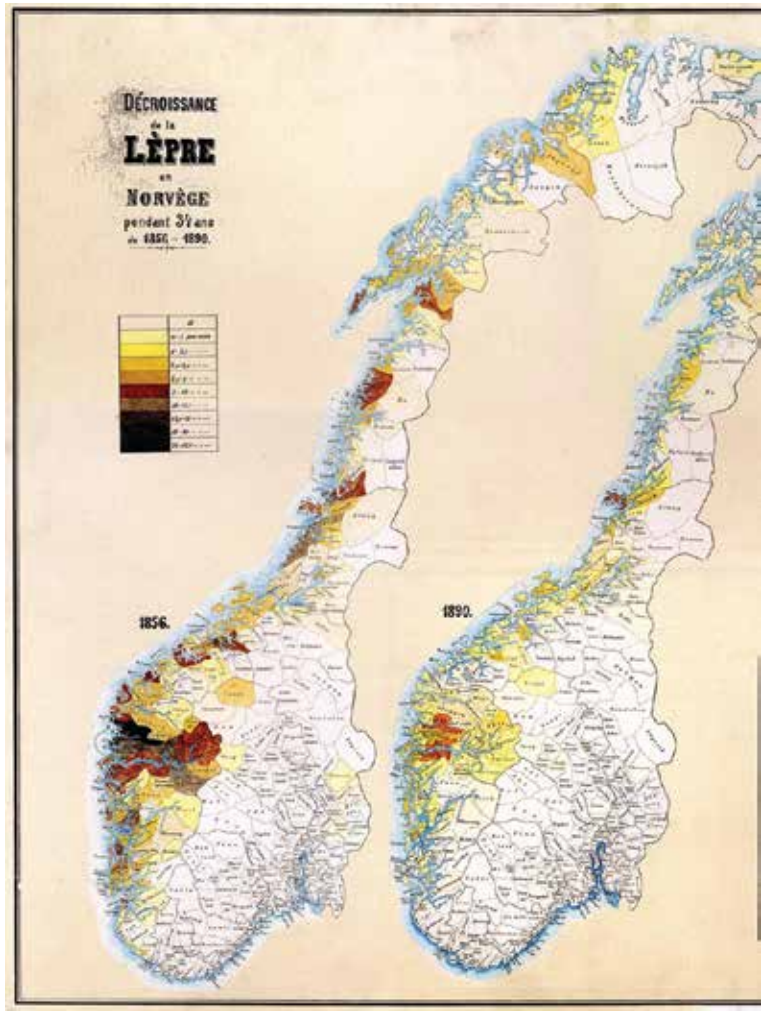
The Leprosy Campaign that Changed the World

By Magnus Vollset, Univeristy of Bergen

In the 1850s, Norway started a leprosy campaign that would change the world. The legacy of the Norwegian fight against what is now known as Hansen's disease is one of success, but also of deep tragedy.

From skeletons and legal texts, we know that leprosy existed in Scandinavia already in the Viking Age. In 1276, king Magnus Haakonsson (1238-1280) established Katharina-Hospitalet in Bergen, referred to as 'Hospitale Leprosorum'. On the continent, the first leprosarium in Charolais, France, is said to have opened in 571 AD. According to Matthew Paris (1200-1259), Europe had by 1250 some 19,000 such institutions. While Paris' estimate is contested, it appears that the disease increased sharply in the eleventh to thirteenth century – particularly after the crusades – and then declined from the fifteenth century onwards. By the 19th century, only pockets remained, one of them along the coast of Norway.

Leprosy made it to the top of the Norwegian policy agenda in the decades leading up to 1850 for three main reasons: firstly, the fear that the number of sufferers was on the rise. Censuses showed that 659 Norwegians were affected by the disease in 1832, and 1122 in 1845. According to the physicians, who pointed out that the counting was done by clergy with no expertise in medicine, and that the disease had no established diagnosis, the identified cases were probably just the tip of the iceberg. The disease was mainly present along the coast, where it caused widespread poverty. Secondly, the presence of leprosy became linked



Map showing the prevalence of the disease in 1856 and 1890. The darker the colour, the greater the prevalence of the disease.

with backwardness and national shame. After all, the dominant narrative stated that leprosy had been rampant in medieval Europe, but that it had then disappeared. Thirdly, there were reports of a cure being close at hand. Sporadic reports of patients being cured offered hope, but mostly the disease was an enigma.

Calls for research were answered by the physician Daniel Cornelius Danielssen (1815-1894) and Professor Carl Wilhelm Boeck (1808-1875). In 1847 they published the medical monograph *On Leprosy,* in which they identified that the disease expressed itself in two main forms: the 'anaesthetic' which chiefly attacked the nerves, while the 'nodular' attacked the tissues. The work was awarded the Montyon Prize from the French Academy of Sciences in Paris in 1855, and *On Leprosy* remained a reference book for clinical diagnosis world-wide for half a century. According to the renowned German pathologist Rudolf Virchow, who was invited to evaluate the Norwegian leprosy campaign in 1859, the publication marked the genesis of leprology – the science of leprosy.

According to Danielssen and Boeck, leprosy was a family disease caused by an imbalance in the blood, a hereditary taint that could skip generations and jump sideways in the family tree. But how to stop it? Initial suggestions for mass sterilization and marriage bans for all in 'leprous families' were dismissed; instead the state decided to invest heavily in institution building. In 1849, a new research hospital was erected in Bergen with 84 beds, and Danielssen was tasked with finding a cure. In the following decade, three large institutions with up to 280 beds were erected in Bergen, Trondheim and Molde. Divided by sex, the institutions were to provide 'good homes' so that those affected would not have to produce offspring to provide care as the slowly debilitating disease progressed. The institutions were also designed to alleviate poverty: if a person was institutionalized, the state would foot the bill; if they stayed in the community, the sick remained a burden on the local poor relief system.

From 1856, Norway demanded that the district physicians send annual reports on all persons suffering from the disease in their area. In the first year, 2.858 cases were registered. The annual reports formed the basis for the Leprosy Registry, recognized by UNESCO in 2003 as the world's oldest national patient registry. In addition to monitoring the effect of the leprosy campaign, the hope was that the registry would explain the mysterious hereditary nature of the disease. In this it never succeeded. Instead, the

next generation of leprosy researchers, headed by Gerhard Armauer Hansen (1841-1912), would in the 1870s reanalyse the registry statistically. By then, the overall number of cases was already reduced by more than 50 percent, and Hansen argued that the decrease happened faster than could be explained by a theory of heredity. Furthermore, he found that the number of new cases had dropped more rapidly in areas that 'evacuated' their sufferers, compared to areas where they had remained in the community.

Hansen's epidemiological analysis was the main argument for leprosy acts being passed in 1877 and 1885. The latter legislation opened for forced admission to an institution if the district physician concluded that a person could not isolate safely at home. Faced with an incurable and contagious disease, Hansen argued that the right of the healthy majority not to be exposed to the disease weighed heavier than the individual freedoms of those already affected. Consequently, the purpose of the institutions was redefined, from 'good homes' to 'effective isolation facilities'.

Research efforts continued, with Hansen's discovery of the leprosy bacillus as a highlight. The bacillus was first observed on February 28, 1873. It was first mentioned in print in a footnote to a report by Henry Vandyke Carter (1831-1897), who was sent from India to investigate whether the Norwegian campaign could inform the approach to leprosy in India. However, almost a decade before the breakthrough of germ theory, the notion that the chronic disease was caused by an elusive rod-shaped microorganism was contested or simply ignored.

To produce proof that the disease was contagious, Hansen conducted an experiment on one of his patients, Kari Nielsdatter Spidsøen (1847-1884), injecting her in the eye with puss from another patient. Spidsøen suffered from the anaesthetic variety of leprosy, the puss came from a patient with tubercular leprosy. Hansen's goal was to produce indisputable proof that the disease was contagious, and being a skilled eye surgeon, he hoped to remove the tubercle before it produced lasting harm.

After strong protests from the patients, the case ended in court. There, Hansen argued for the greater good: proving the aetiology of the disease would guide public health measures, possibly preventing millions from developing the incurable disease. Spidsøen's argument was more straightforward: experimenting on patients was simply not acceptable. The court agreed with Spidsøen and pointed out that she had never been informed of the purpose of the injection, nor given her consent. On May 31,

1880, Hansen lost his right to practice medicine. While the verdict established legal precedent for the principle of informed consent, sources show that the main rationale was fears of a patient revolt. For Hansen, the verdict was inconsequential: his role as a physician had taken time away from research, and after the sentence his research position was immediately expanded. A year later, *Spidsøen* was granted her wish to be transferred to St. Jørgens Hospital, now the Bergen Leprosy Museum, where she died in 1884.

The number of cases continued to decline, and at the first

The Armauer Hansen Memorial Room in *Pleiestiftelsen no.1* (The Nursing Institution for Leprosy Patients No.1) which was inaugurated in Bergen in 1857. It is a small museum, established in 1962, and is open on request. In addition to the library, where papers from the trial from Hansen's human experiment are on prominent display, one can visit the original medical laboratory as it was used from the 1890s.

International Leprosy Conference in Berlin in 1897, the campaign was presented as proof that through segregation it was possible to get the disease under control. The conference passed recommendations arguing that isolation was the best means to prevent the spread of the disease, highlighting the Norwegian system of obligatory notification and isolation as exemplary. The next international conference took place in Bergen in 1909, now with Germany, Iceland and Sweden accompanying Norway as countries to serve as models.

News of the court case, or details of how the implementation of the leprosy legislation left room for local negotiations, were not part of the narrative when the Norwegian leprosy campaign was promoted abroad. Consequently, many countries established even harsher isolation practices, with reference to the Norwegian success. This leaves an ambivalent legacy. On the one hand, the campaign was an astonishing success in that the number of new cases plummeted. The discovery of the leprosy bacillus was a scientific achievement, and vital in disentangling leprosy from its biblical and mythical connotations; the epidemiological research set new standards for registry studies, and the Norwegian approach has long been praised as especially humane (sociologist Zachary Gussow famously presented the history of leprosy in Norway under the headline 'the enlightened kingdom'). On the other hand, the search for a cure never succeeded. The success came at a price, paid for by those who suffered, first from the disease then from incarceration.

Norwegian-British Relationships

Erratum. *In the Special Autumn edition, in Inger-Marie Fleischer's piece the first few lines should read, 'My father, Bror Ørnulf Fleischer was born in Christiania in February 1898, though his parents' home at the time was Uleåborg, where my grandfather owned the sawmill. Daddy was a'boy soldier' with the 'White Finns' in the Finnish Civil War. After attending Forestry School in southern Norway in 1922 he spent five years with the Passvik Timber Company, which was backed by the English Investment Company, Denny, Mott and Dixon'. The company then wound up this operation...' From here the article continues as in Special Autumn Edition*

John Corbet-Milward (UK member)

My Norwegian grandparents lived in Oslo, close to Ris tram station, and my mother had acquired a canoe to enable her to get out and about a bit. One Sunday afternoon on one of her mini 'voyages' she spotted a large British warship at a buoy in the Oslo Fjord, so she paddled out to it to take a closer look, only to be spotted by a bunch of Midshipmen hanging over the side who then invited her onboard for a cup of tea.

Things must have gone well as one of the Midshipmen kept in touch

and arranged to meet Erna in England a few months later when she was taking time out from a course at a finishing school near London. Things must have gone even better as Douglas invited her up to Scotland to meet his formidable parents and extended family ... Unfortunately, Douglas had to join a ship just before she returned to Oslo to take up a new job at the Palace, but being a polite young Naval Officer he asked a term mate called Roger who was convalescing from a sports injury at his parents' home in London to 'look after Erna' while he was away. As she left for home after a whirlwind visit to meet Douglas's friend Roger in Thurloe Square, a maid uttered the prophetic words: 'that's the girl you are going to marry'.

Well, it didn't actually happen until 1945 !

Back in Oslo, my mother was recruited by a Palace insider and joined Milorg not long after the German invasion in 1940, and she operated in its logistics division as 'Pernille' until the Gestapo began to take an interest. She was smuggled out to Sweden in 1942 on a false passport to avoid capture and worked in Stockholm for the Norwegian Legation until she was flown out to England in 1943 to join the code breaking department of the Norwegian Department of Foreign Affairs.

Meanwhile, my father had joined the Fleet Air Arm and was kept busy flying missions in the ill-fated Norwegian Campaign and helping to deal with the maritime threat from Vichy France... and, after a near death experience in North Africa, he was transferred to training pilots in Scotland.

My parents kept in touch via Norwegian cousins of my mother in the USA, re-kindled their relationship in England in 1943/4 and finally got married at St Paul's Knightsbridge in London in January 1945.

I count myself lucky to be here!!

Berit Scott (UK member)

I first came to live in London as a newly-wed in the 1970s. I had met my British husband a few years earlier when I was working at the Norwegian delegation to NATO and he was a journalist working for Reuters in Brussels. After a few years of foreign postings, we returned to London, had a baby girl and settled down in our new house in west London. I had become a Londoner. However, this soon turned out to be only Phase One

Phase Two

In another house on the same road lived another couple with their baby girl. The two girls became best friends, but a few years later her parents split up and the other family moved away from our street. Not too long after that my own marriage came to an end and I moved back to Norway with my daughter. I was very lucky to find a perfect new job at the Foreign Ministry. However, when Norway voted against membership of the European Community (now the EU) in the 1992 referendum, my job in Oslo came to an end and I returned to London to work at the Norwegian Embassy, where I stayed on for the next 17 years. I had become a Londoner again.

Phase Three

My daughter was now nearing university age and all this time she had kept in touch with her little friend from the road where they had first lived. I didn't see much of the other little girl's parents. Then one fine autumn day the two young ladies (by now) got together and came up with a bright idea: each had a single parent and thought it time for both of them to find a new partner. As all four of us were keen skiers, what could be better than to organise a skiing holiday together? Yes, it worked and Guy and I got married a few years later!

All four of us on our wedding day, July 2017 at Chiswick House.
(My granddaughter was born three weeks later)

Phase Four

I don't know which of the four of us was the happiest about these arrangements. One thing is certain: it's never too late and we now intend to live happily ever after.

The End.

Ian Shrimpton (UK member)

How I met my Norwegian wife, Elsa Margrethe Shrimpton, nee Qvale.

In December 1960, I had just returned from working abroad and I was in Regent Street doing some Christmas shopping when I discovered a shop, the likes of which I hadn't seen before - 'Designs of Scandinavia'. There were two very elegant floors, ground and basement and I wandered around looking at all the beautifully designed cutlery, porcelain, fabrics and so on and eventually bought something in the basement where I was served by a very attractive girl. On leaving, I glanced at the window and saw a slim, blonde girl, who was half facing into the shop so I didn't see her properly. However, I was very entangled with an English girl at that time so had no particular incentive to revisit the shop and thought no more about it.

About four months later, having got a job with the London office of a Swedish company and having nowhere to live, my boss suggested that I might like to lodge temporarily in a 'pension' where they sometimes put young Swedish employees who had come to London for a month or two. And so I moved to 68 Princes Square, Bayswater - a typical London town house where the elderly lady who owned it had lived since she was a girl. She and her late husband had started accommodating young foreign students, initially as a favour to some foreign friends, but the venture snowballed into a small business. When I arrived there, we were about twenty-five in number, of which only a couple of us were British, the rest coming from all over Europe and Scandinavia. It was a very lively establishment as can be imagined.

On the second or third day I was there, I came down to breakfast and there to my astonishment, were the two girls from Designs of Scandinavia; Hedvig, the girl who served me and Elsa, the 'girl in the window'. I soon discovered that they were both Norwegian and had been chosen the previous autumn by the owners, Porsgrunds Porselænsfabrikk, together with one or two more Norwegian girls, to come to England to staff the new shop which had been opened in November 1960 by H.M. King Olav.

I soon made it my business to get to know Elsa and, even more quickly, to fall for her in a big way. And in my enthusiastic endeavour to know her better I gate-crashed her 17th May wine and cheese party, which she and Hedvig were holding in their room for the few other Norwegians living in the house; I understand that this didn't exactly endear me to her! However, my early proposals of marriage were not taken seriously and it was a few months before I got her to realise I was serious and to say 'yes'.

We married in Oslo in 1963, so this year sees our 57th anniversary. We have a daughter and a son, six grandchildren, of which five are girls, and one great-granddaughter.

But to close, here's a strange fact: for reasons I don't understand, I remember to this day exactly what the 'girl in the window' was wearing whereas I have no idea what Hedvig or anyone else in the shop was wearing that day, just Elsa. Fate must have been playing a hand.

Angels in the Snow (UK member - names withheld by request)

I grew up on a farm in Vestfold. After jobs at Hjemmet for Døve in Andebu and Husfliden in Oslo, I went to study at Haandarbejdets Fremme in Copenhagen. I made new friends at the Norwegian Church and joined an English-speaking Bible-study group led by a Danish theology student called Finn. They needed a place to meet and there was a room in the basement of my college which was central. I had met Astrid at church, Sandi came from America, Godwin was from Sri Lanka and there was an Egyptian in the group. Finn often went to the American Lutheran Church. One Sunday afternoon he rang the doorbell and stood there with a young Englishman he had met there.

He was an engineer who periodically came to work in Denmark staying for several weeks at a time. Astrid had arranged for the group to use a hytte in the Valdres mountains. Everyone was invited, but in the end only 3 girls and the English boy could make it. Friday afternoon we girls boarded the daily ship to Oslo. We looked out for the boy, but as the ship cast off we saw his taxi just arriving – too late. He shouted out that he would see us in Oslo. Sure enough, next day he was on the quay to meet us. It was October and there was snow on the ground.

There was a well near the *hytte* but no electricity. After a few days Astrid and Sandi had to return to Copenhagen. We were close to a lake and went for long hikes. We had a small map but it didn't show the extent of the lake. Foolishly the English boy wanted to walk around it, but it started to get dark and we had come too far to turn back. We saw a light in the valley below and decided to make for it. It came from a *hytte* where some Danish boys were staying. They invited us in and gave us food. We were far from our own *hytte* but they drove us back. It was freezing cold but we lit the stove in the kitchen and moved our bedding in there for warmth and went to sleep on the floor, lying head to head. Next day I taught him how to make angels in the snow.

He went back to England, but the next year he visited me and I went to spend Easter with him in London. I had a job as a teacher and at the end of the summer term needed a break and booked a cheap package holiday to Italy. I phoned his mother but she had no idea where he was working. The day before I left, he phoned me and told me he was in Italy and said he would come and meet me at the airport! We travelled around with his work and had a romantic weekend in Venice while deciding to get married.

I went back to Norway and he came to see me and my family. The next year I visited him and his family. He made trips to Denmark but I was in Norway, so we kept in touch by letter and cassette tape. Then I wrote to tell him that my father had told me not to marry a foreigner and that we should break up. But we didn't. 3 years after I met him, I packed my bags and moved to London. We married in secret, but the next year, 1976, we married again in Norway at Sandar Church, this time with my parents' blessing.

Susan Keane (UK member)

My father Inge Øvstedal (July 1919–December 2010) was born on a farm in Øvstedal near Tresfjord in Møre & Romsdal. Knowing that his older brother would inherit the farm, he took a 5-year apprenticeship to become a tailor. All his life, he dressed smartly and even skied in a tie well into his seventies.

Inge was 20 and skiing in the mountains when he saw Molde being bombed by the Germans. This terrible sight changed his life. It made him decide to go to England to fight for Norway's freedom. He made one unsuccessful boat crossing to Scotland, going into hiding afterwards. Six weeks later, on 20th April 1941, he escaped from Steinshamn, where he had been working as a tailor, to Shetland with 12 friends on a fishing boat. The men were arrested on landing and taken to the Royal Patriotic School in Wandsworth, London, where Rudolf Hess was interned for a while. There Inge was interrogated by Joachim Rønneberg, who identified him as 'a good Norwegian' and later became a good friend.

On release from detention, Inge spent a few months cooking on a degaussing ship* in Scotland before being recruited as a tailor to Squadron 331 of the Royal Norwegian Air Force. Six weeks before the Normandy Invasion, the Norwegian squadrons were moved from North Weald Airfield to a base in a field outside Bognor Regis. When King Haakon visited the airfield, Crown Prince Olaf snagged his raincoat on some barbed wire, so Inge made some hasty repairs. When I told King Harald this anecdote at the ANS celebrations in 2018, he roared with laughter.

Barbara (October 1921–November 2012) was born in Bognor Regis, West Sussex. She was a quiet, romantic, artistic schoolgirl, who loved to write stories and go to the cinema. Her first contact with Norway was at school when she became the pen friend of a young Norwegian girl. At Worthing Art College, she studied the history and design of clothing. On graduation, she had five of her own designs made up by Norman Hartnell, who became Queen Elizabeth's dressmaker. During the war, she worked in an ammunitions factory and did fire watching from the roof of a local undertaker in the evenings.

Barbara met Inge during a 'ladies' excuse me' at a dance in 1944. She spotted him dancing with a pretty girl, so took the opportunity to tap the girl

on the shoulder and say 'excuse me' so that she could dance with Inge. It was love at first sight for this tall, blonde, blue-eyed Norwegian and this tall, dark-haired, glamorous English woman.

Barbara recalled coming out of the cinema in Bognor on the eve of D-Day to see the sky black with planes flying towards France. She guessed that Inge would be on his way soon. He crossed to Normandy on D-Day+3 and landed his lorry safely on the beach. Some weeks later, his back was broken when his lorry drove over a mine, so he was evacuated to London encased in plaster of Paris to work in the offices of the Norwegian Government in Exile.

As soon as Inge's back healed and his plaster cast was removed, he rejoined his unit in the Netherlands. They moved on through Europe and on VE Day Inge was in central Germany occupying an abandoned German officers' mess. In contrast, Barbara took the train to London and spent VE Day and night with friends dancing in Piccadilly where searchlights illuminated the city's celebrations instead of sweeping the skies for enemy planes.

Barbara and Inge were married in 1945 and in 1946 moved with baby Susan to Gardemoen, where Inge was stationed. Barbara loved Norway immediately and was welcomed with open arms by Inge's family. However

Inge and Barbara Øvstedal with baby Susan and Sverre Øvstedal in 1947

the unusually cold winter of 1947 was too tough for her, so they decided to return to England in time for the 1948 London Olympics.

There was not much money in bespoke tailoring after the war so in 1952 Barbara & Inge emigrated to Toronto in the hope of a better life, but they lasted only a year because the very cold winter aggravated Inge's old back injury. They lived the rest of their lives in Bognor Regis, but spent their Easter and summer holidays in Øvstedal.

When their children left home for university, Barbara started to write short stories and magazine serials. These were so successful that she was asked to write some historical novels. She wrote 47 books in total, including a travel book about Norway. Her books were translated into over 20 languages. Her pen name was Rosalind Laker

Posting – A 'very well adapted' System for Travelling in 19th Century Norway

Bjarne Rogan, University of Oslo

Posting in Norway is in most cases 'very well adapted' to the local conditions of this country, wrote Thomas Forester after his visit in 1848. And he added: 'in many ways it is superior to all other communication systems that I know'.

Thomas Forster was one of many British (and other foreigners) who visited the country during the 19th century. He was fascinated by its scenery, the fjords and the mountains, but he also took a keen interest in the posting system – or *skyssvesen*.

A peculiar way of travelling

This interest he shared with a large number of foreign visitors. The several hundred published travelogues from the period abound with amusing descriptions. The *skyssvesen* was not only peculiar to the country; it offered a mode of conveyance that was experienced as highly exotic by foreigners, who were used to stage-coaches. The posting was organized by the authorities, but it was performed by the local peasants. The peasants accompanied the traveller from one posting station to the next, with their private horse(s) and vehicles – or saddles, or boats.

Some travellers found it thrilling to drive themselves. Some despaired

over long waiting hours at the farms or complained about uncomfortable material conditions. And a few frowned upon the close contact with the peasants. Others found the interaction with the locals amusing and marvelled at their care for the horses. The travellers were regularly ordered to step down and walk up the steep hills, to spare the horses. Hardly any visitor during the century was indifferent to the travelling conditions in Norway.

In 1816, the old system of free conveyance for all public servants, civil as well as military and ecclesiastical, was abolished. Henceforth all travellers had to pay. The burden still lay on the peasants, but it was now paid work.

By the time Forester visited Norway, the main answer to the challenge of organizing conveyance was still taxation in kind, based on real or leased property. Posting was a duty levied upon peasants, in proportion to the tax value of their land. It was by now possible for them to pay their way out of it (see below), a solution, however, that they found less attractive until well after the mid-century.

Two varieties

When Forester visited the country, close to one thousand farmsteads were appointed posting stations, spread out along the roads at intervals of 10 to 15 kilometres, or even more in sparsely populated areas. These stations were of two kinds, called *skysskifte* and *skysstasjon*.

The great majority were *skysskifter.* The peasants within a radius of up to one old mile (11 km.) formed a corps called *skysslaget*. The corps had from ten to more than one hundred members, depending on the density of traffic and of the population. The members were summoned to meet at the *skysskifte,* hence the term *tilsigelsesskyss* or 'summons system'.

When a traveller arrived, the *skysskaffer* – that is the owner of the *skysskifte*, set out immediately to summon the peasant whose turn it was that day. He had to travel up to 11 kilometers, hoping to find the peasant at home, to have him bridle and hitch up the horse and return to the awaiting traveller. The law prescribed a waiting time of maximum three hours. If the time limit was exceeded, the peasant or the *skysskaffer*, depending on the case, risked a fine.

The peasant conducted the traveller to the next *skysskifte* and returned to his farm. For the peasant it meant half a day, or perhaps a whole day, spent on this duty – but after all with some longed-for cash in his pocket.

Same procedure at the next *skysskifte*, where the traveller had to pass

more hours of waiting in the farmyard or in a simple farm abode. He could hardly expect to make more than three distances a day. For each summoning he had to pay a small fee to the *skysskaffer*, and to the peasant a fixed price for the horse and the vehicle. To spare waiting hours he might also pay a forerunner – or fore-rider – to precede him and to prepare everything beforehand. But this was expensive and often futile; not seldom did the traveller overtake the fore-rider!

Although 'well adapted' to local conditions, the summons system had several inconveniences. For the traveller it meant slow progress and much waiting. A day's journey could mean as much waiting as travelling. *Skyssdagbøkene*, the mandatory visitor's books at the stations, are full of complaints, which the local sheriff was obliged to follow up. These books offer an abundance of details about sick horses and lost horse shoes, rickety carts,

Drawing by Carl Fredrik Diriks (1814-1895), probably from the 1850s. In case the text too small to read, it says : 'The Bey say that your Leggage is altfor much, and that You have kjört som et Sviin and meist skamskjört Mærra hasses, and ask om You will betale-pay Dobbel. To judge from the smiling observer the peasant and *skyssgutt* may be trying to swindle the tourist.

bad harness and broken carriage shafts, impolite or drunken peasants, and dubious price claims.

Text
'Whoa! The harness pin!"
Normal coveyance with a chaise cart.
Drawing by Johannes Flintoe (1787-1870) ca.1840.
The tourist is holding the reins and obviously going too fast downhill. Flintoe's drawing is also a comment on the reported deficiences of the equipment of the peasants

For the *skysskaffer* and the local authorities, the challenge was to set up a turns system both in accordance with the tax value of the land and adapted to differences in horse-keeping, work seasons on the farm, forest management, etc. – the horse being the most important asset of the farm. The yearly regulations formed complicated tables. The attitude of the peasants varied with time and place. In some regions and some periods, the system was popular because it provided sorely needed cash. But the summoning was often badly timed with regard to tasks like seeding and harvesting, logging and transport work.

Good-bye to taxation in kind

The alternative was the *skysstasjon*, a solution where the corps of peasants paid a farmer to keep enough horses and vehicles and do the posting himself, or to use his farm hands, or – to the foreigners' surprise – some young boy or girl on the farm.

Stations of this kind were exceptions until the mid-century. During the next decades, however, they quickly took over due to the general transition from subsistence to monetary economy. After ca. 1880 all stations along the main roads were of this type.

Travelling became more expensive, as the rates per mile, horse and vehicle were higher at these stations. But the waiting time was reduced to 30 minutes, enough for the station-holder to harness the horse and make ready the vehicle. Another advantage was better vehicles. Earlier, many well-off tourists had bought or hired their own carioles and required only a horse or horses at the *skysskifte* – to steer clear of the uncomfortable carts of the peasants. Just as many upper-class travellers in the 18th century had brought with them private saddles to avoid using the farmers'.

With Norway's topography and sparse population, the authorities strove hard through the centuries with the conveyance challenge. The result was a peculiar posting system, which offered a cultural and social meeting place between upper-class travellers and the peasantry. With the advent of steam and rails in the latter part of the 19th century, the posting system slowly lost its importance. But in all its varieties, with all its material, political and historiographical aspects, it is a vast field to study. Much more could be said. Posting was not as unpopular among the peasants as many historians would have us believe.

Literature

Rogan, Bjarne 1986. *Det gamle skysstellet. Reiseliv i Noreg frå mellomalderen til førre hundreåret.* Oslo: Samlaget.

Otto Ruge. Hærføreren, by Tom Kristiansen

Review by Patrick Salmon

One afternoon in 1922 a group of Norwegian army officers were smoking on the veranda of their barracks after a strenuous day of exercises.

As they chatted, one officer asked his colleagues who they thought might become commander-in-chief if the country ever found itself at war. A number of prominent military figures were mentioned until the discussion was suddenly halted. 'There's the man!', said the officer, pointing to young Captain Ruge who happened to be passing by. Ruge's name had not cropped up in the discussion, and he was scarcely known even in military circles, yet his professionalism and devotion to duty had already made a mark. Eighteen years later the prophecy was fulfilled when, on 11 April 1940, barely 24 hours after Germany's surprise attack on Norway, Colonel Otto Ruge was promoted Major-General and appointed to lead his country's desperately improvised defence.

Photo credit: Nordlandsmuseet

Eschewing conventional chronology, Tom Kristiansen's biography of Otto Ruge throws us into the middle of these dramatic events, with Ruge leading the retreat up Gudbrandsdalen and discovering the shocking amateurishness of Norway's British allies, before being evacuated to fight a second campaign in the far north. Then, after the reconquest of Narvik and facing abandonment by the allies, Ruge 'changed the direction of Norwegian history' by persuading King Haakon not to share his people's fate but to go into exile along with his government. Ruge himself would stay to negotiate an armistice with the Germans and become, for a long time, Norway's only prisoner of war. Kristiansen maintains that Ruge's achievement was not merely to conduct a heroic resistance but also to coin the striking phrases that enabled Norwegians to understand the nature of their national struggle – 'like Churchill, Ruge mobilised the language itself and sent it into battle' – and then to serve as a living symbol of resistance through five years of captivity.

After such an exciting start, Ruge's wartime life slowed to a snail's pace, but his biography does not lose momentum. Kristiansen skilfully weaves the narrative of Ruge's early life and military career with the daily prison routine: first as a solitary prisoner at Grini (not yet the notorious concentration camp it was later to become), later in Germany and Poland before being liberated by the Red Army in April 1945. Ruge used the early months of his imprisonment as an opportunity to reflect on his upbringing and his heritage, writing a memoir intended only for his sons to read. We learn of the ancestor who came to Norway from Rostock in the late 17th century; of his elderly, eccentric father; of the mother who died when he was six; of his much-loved Uncle Otto, army officer, artist and horticulturalist; and of his closeness to his mother's Swedish family. Always determined on a military career, Ruge had even briefly contemplated joining the Swedish army and was the only one among his colleagues to regret the dissolution of the union in 1905.

By the 1930s Ruge had emerged as Norway's leading military thinker, serving as chief of the general staff from 1933 to 1938 and arousing controversy among his more conservative colleagues with his respect for civilian politicians and his radical view of Norway's strategic position. Traditionally remote from conflict, Norway was now, in Ruge's view, on the front line of confrontation between Britain, Germany and the USSR, thanks not least to the growth of air power. In 1937 he led joint military and naval exercises based on the assumption that Germany would seek to establish a base on the south-west coast of Norway in a future war: a scenario judged unrealistic by his superiors.

Liberation, when it came in 1945, was both triumph and anti-climax. Along with King Haakon, Ruge was the most visible symbol of Norway's national resistance, and he was on the quayside to greet the King when he landed in Oslo on 7 June. By that time he had been reluctantly persuaded to resume his position as chief of the defence staff. But much had changed. Norway's war effort had been conducted from London in close alliance with the British, and by a new generation of resistance fighters at home. Some of Ruge's old comrades were still in government, but there were others he barely knew. In October 1945 the youthful Jens Christian Hauge, leader of the Milorg resistance movement, was appointed minister of defence; Ruge resigned four weeks later. The rest of his life was spent in honourable retirement, living with his wife Ingeborg, whom he had first met in 1899 when she was 16 and he 17, in a modest home in the old fortress town of Mysen near the Swedish border, until his death at the age of 79 in 1961.

Tom Kristiansen, one of Norway's foremost military historians, has written a marvellous biography, drawing on the rich collection of private

papers placed at his disposal by Ruge's family. Austere, principled, dedicated to his profession and to his country, Ruge must have been an intimidating figure to many, but he had a softer side. In April 1940, learning that there were three young women cypher clerks serving with the British expeditionary force, he sent his adjutant to Lillehammer to buy the biggest boxes of chocolate he could find. An hour later, each of them was presented with a large box of Kong Haakon-konfekt 'with the compliments of the Norwegian commanding general'.

Otto Ruge. Hærføreren, by Tom Kristiansen, (Aschehoug, 2019), 449 kr (Ebok 169 kr)

Norway Guest of Honour at the Frankfurt Book Fair

By Kari Dickson

In the middle of October last year, Norway was the Guest of Honour at the Frankfurt Book Fair, which is recognised as the most important book fair in the world. The showcase of Norwegian literature that NORLA put together on behalf of Norway was the largest ever investment in Norwegian culture outside the country. And it was spectacular. The programme ran throughout the year at various cultural festivals, culminating in six days of literary events around the Book Fair itself, with packed audiences. For those who are interested, a full overview of the project can be found at: https://norway2019.com/en Many of the events were recorded and can be found on YouTube. The project was hailed a huge success, with record sales, media coverage and attendance at the Norwegian Pavilion.

As Pamela Paul, editor of the New York Times Book Review, said in 2018: 'Suddenly it's all about Norway. Everywhere.' And that certainly was the case in the year running up to the Frankfurt Book Fair. And while the UK cannot boast anything like the number of Norwegian books that were translated into German that year, Norwegian was the second most translated language in the UK when it came to books in 2019. We were all waiting avidly to see what 2020 might bring in the wake of Frankfurt Book Fair. But then, of course, Covid struck, and all book fairs and festivals have had to be cancelled, and everyone has had to scramble to organise online alternatives.

However, the reason that the Norwegian government was perhaps willing to invest so much in the Guest of Honour programme is that Norwegian literature was already selling so well. For many years, NORLA, the Norwegian publishers and foreign rights agents have been working hard to build what is now a very solid foundation. There has been considerable growth in the translation of all genres, not just crime fiction, as so many people seem to believe. In particular, there has been a marked increase in the sale of non-fiction titles. How could anyone have missed the unexpected runaway success of Lars Mytting's *Norwegian Wood*? Generous translation grants have also encouraged English-speaking publishers to take greater risks. And over the past decade or so, publishers in the USA and Canada have become more active, buying titles themselves, as opposed to licensing translations. There are now many Norwegian books published there that do not always make it into the UK market (but can be bought online). And we can be thankful for this strong standing, given that the Frankfurt effect has been replaced by the Corona-effect this year, with a general slowdown in the industry.

Another development in recent years, which I am particularly pleased about, is the increase in women in translation. A lot of excellent books written by women are now feeding through into the international market. In NORLA's post celebrating WIT (Women in Translation) Month in August this year, it states that 32.5% of all books translated into English are by written by women, so there is still some way to go before the balance is redressed. Vigdis Hjorth, for example, is finally being recognised for the great writer she is in the English-speaking world. Hanne Ørstavik also received a lot of attention last year, with her novel *Love*, translated by Martin Aitken, more than twenty years after it was first published in Norwegian. Others who have been published in translation for the first time in the past couple of years, to critical acclaim, include Maja Lunde, Helga Flatland, Erika Fatland, Anne Sverdrup-Thygeson and Gunnhild Øyehaug, to name but a few. However, we are yet to see a woman receive the same attention as say Knausgaard and Nesbø, and that is not simply because they are not as good writers.

So what can we enjoy now and what have we got to look forward to in the coming year? This is by no means an extensive list, so please forgive if I've missed out something essential!

Vigdis Hjorth's *Long Live the Post Horn!*, translated by Charlotte Barslund, came out in the summer of 2019. Agnes Ravatn's second book in English, *The Seven Doors,* translated by Rosie Hedger, was published in July 2019. Roy Jacobsen's third book about Ingrid Barrøy, *The Eyes of Rige*l,

translated by Don Bartlett and Don Shaw, came out in the spring of 2019. Jo Nesbø, of course, has another book, *The Kingdom,* translated by Robert Ferguson. And the publication of Anders Bortne's *Sleepless*, translated by Lucy Moffatt, was published in September 2019.

Old friends who have new books coming this year include Lars Saabye Christensen with another book from the *Echoes of the City,* translated by Don Bartlett; Erika Fatland, *The Border* translated by Kari Dickson; Anne Sverdrup-Thygeson, *On the Shoulders of Nature,* translated by Lucy Moffatt, and Kjersti Annesdatter Skomsvold, *The Child* translated by Martin Aitkin. And new names to look out for are: Hilde Østby, *Creativity*; Nazneen Khan-Østrem, *London,* translated by Alison McCullough; Marie Aubert, *Grown Ups*, translated by Rosie Hedger; Klara Hveberg, *Lean Your Loneliness Slowly Against Mine,* translated by Alison McCullough, Jan Grue *I Live a Life Like Yours,* translated by Becky Crook; Nina Lykke, *Natural Causes,* translated by Becky Crook; Are Kalvø, *Hiking to Hell* translated by Lucy Moffatt, Tore Skeie, *The Wolf Times,* translated by Alison McCullough and Helene Flood. *The Therapist,* translated by Alison McCullough.

So as you can see, there is plenty here to choose from, and enough to keep you busy reading for a year, at least. So while we bunker down into the early wintery months of 2021, Norwegian literature in translation is still in robust health for the moment and continues to punch above its weight.

Books featured on the Back Cover,

Kjell Ola Dahl, *Sister,* translated by Don Bartlett, Orenda Books, 2020.

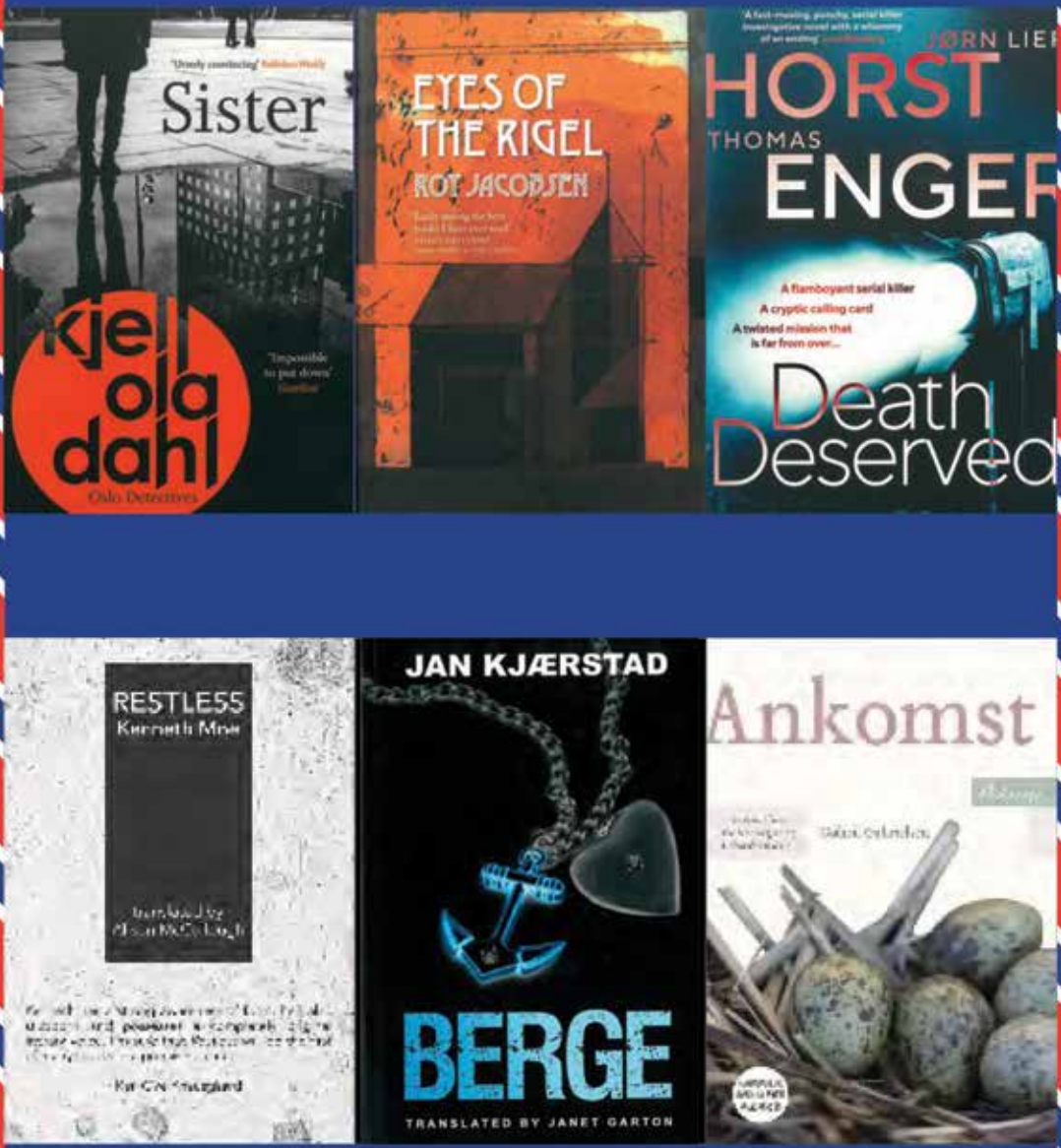
Roy Jacobsen, *The Eyes of Rigel*, translated by Don Bartlett and Don Shaw, MacLehose Press, 2020.

Jørn Lier Horst and Thomas Enger, *Death Deserved,* translated by Ann Bruce, Orenda Books, 2020.

Kenneth Moe, *Restless*, translated by Alison McCullough, Nordisk Books, 2020.

Jan Kjærstad, *Berge*, translated by Janet Garton, Norvik Press, 2019.

Gøhril Gabrielsen, *Ankomst*, translated by Deborh Dawkin, Peirene Press, 2020. (Winner of the English Pen Award)



6 Norwegian Novels recently translated into English